

WASHINGTON IS SQUARELY BEHIND SLOCUM IN SENDING TROOPS OVER MEXICAN BORDER

PETERS IS NAMED BY PARTY CAUCUS ON FIRST BALLOT

Anti-Saloon League Field Secretary Chosen as Prohibition Commissioner.

REPUBLICANS ARE DENIED VOICE IN SELECTION

Democrats Vote Down Plan to Fill Office on Floor of General Assembly.

STOIMY DEBATE IN CAUCUS

Names of R. R. Davis and Judge J. H. Stuart Also in Nomination.

In a joint caucus that began at a serious and ended in a more cheerful manner, the Democrats of the General Assembly last night nominated Rev. J. Sidney Peters, field secretary of the Anti-Saloon League of Virginia, to fill the office of commissioner of prohibition, newly created by the Mann bill.

Mr. Peters was chosen on the first ballot, receiving thirty-four of the thirty-seven votes cast. The other two nominees, Judge James H. Stuart, of Roanoke, and Richard B. Davis, of Petersburg, received eighteen and fifteen votes, respectively. Upon the motion of Senator Cannon, of Richmond, the nomination was declared unanimous.

The election will be confirmed by both houses of the General Assembly, as a matter of course, as soon as Governor Stuart signs the prohibition bill. Mr. Peters will take office on September 1, to serve a term of four years at an annual salary of \$2,500.

SPRIT OF REVELRY OVERCOMES ATTEMPT AT SERIOUSNESS

The actual ceremony of nomination and election differed only from similar proceedings in previous joint caucuses in its spirit of high revelry. Coming as an uncontrollable reaction to the serious periods of the first stages of the meeting, this spirit broke into open disorder towards the close, drawing second speeches and rising roughness over every attempt at seriousness.

Gathered pursuant to a joint resolution adopted Wednesday night calling for a joint caucus to nominate a commissioner of prohibition, the meeting was confronted at the outset with a motion to reconsider the vote by which the resolution was adopted the night before.

The motion was offered by Chairman Jordan, of the joint caucus, who resigned the chair to Senator Rison, of Chatham, and took the floor to speak in his motion.

SCENE IS UNIQUE IN HISTORY OF CAUCUSES

There ensued a scene which old members said was unique in the history of the Democratic caucuses of the General Assembly. Interrupted on an average of once a minute with questions, some of them polite to the point of sarcasm, Mr. Jordan pleaded for thirty minutes for a reconsideration of the call and for the election of the commissioner in open session by Democrats and Republicans acting in concert.

In answer to him rose Senator Addison, of Lynchburg, with a twenty-minute speech, in which he denounced the suggestion of Senator Jordan as nothing less than absolute heresy, asserting the plain and undeniable duty of the Democratic party to take sole charge of filling this office and assume undivided the responsibility of enforcing the law which a Legislature of Democrats had been elected by the people to frame.

Mr. Jordan prophesied that to refuse now to give the minority a voice in the selection of a commissioner of prohibition, after the loyal service of Republicans in helping to carry the State into the "dry" column, would be to inject into the situation in Virginia a virus that will ultimately destroy the temperance cause.

ADDISON CHAMPIONS DUTY OF DEMOCRATS

Senator Addison declared his solemn conviction that the Democrats of the General Assembly could not make a graver, more serious or more alarming mistake than to fail at this time to discharge their plain duty to nominate an officer who, it is commonly believed, he said, will be in a position, if he chooses, to develop a far-reaching political machine.

To share this important party duty with the Republicans, he said, will be to dampen the zeal of the great Democratic army of the State and to shake the confidence and faith of its leaders.

There was occasional applause for Delegate Jordan, but the crowd that packed the floor and gallery interjected Senator Addison with frequent and hearty demonstrations of its approval. It was a battle between the member from Pulaski and the Senator from Lynchburg. No one undertook to discuss the issue when they had finished.

The pending question was ordered, and Acting Chairman Rison called for a vote on the Jordan motion to reconsider the vote by which the caucus on the night before had set this meeting for the selection of a prohibition commissioner.

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Choice of Caucus



REV. J. SIDNEY PETERS, field secretary of the Anti-Saloon League, is named by Democrats of General Assembly as first Prohibition Commissioner of Virginia.

WAR AGAINST PORTUGAL DECLARED BY GERMANY

Portuguese Minister at Berlin Handed Passports on Tuesday Afternoon.

REASONS GIVEN FOR ACTION

Chiefly Due to Recent Seizure of German Merchants Interned in Portugal Ports, but Other Branches of Neutrality Also Factors.

BERLIN, March 9.—(via wireless to Sayville.)—Germany declared war on Portugal at 3:30 o'clock yesterday afternoon and handed the Portuguese minister his passports.

The German government, therefore, considers herself from this time in war with the Portuguese government. It is the conclusion of a declaration handed by the German minister at Lisbon to the Portuguese government and in Berlin to the Portuguese minister, the news agency announcement says.

"The German declaration," says the news agency, "emphasizes the fact that this step was made necessary by the recent illegal seizure of German ships in Portuguese ports, which is the gravest sort of breach of neutrality and of special treaties Germany therefore, is obliged to give up her former attitude of forbearance, which she had maintained because of Portugal's awkward situation."

"The declaration enumerates a long series of breaches of neutrality by the Portuguese government, such as the permission of free passage to English troops through the colony of Mozambique; the permission given to English men-of-war to use Portuguese ports for the purpose of refueling; the permission given to English ships to use Madeira as a naval base; actual engagements between Portuguese and German troops on the frontier of German Southwest Africa and Angola; frequent insults to the German nation by members of the Portuguese Parliament, who never were reprimanded."

"The declaration further points out that the seizure of German ships in neutral Portuguese ports on February 23 was an act against the law and the treaties concluded between Germany and Portugal."

GERMAN FAMILIES LEAVING PORTUGAL

PARIS, March 9.—(via dispatch to the Havas Agency from Lisbon states that the exodus of German families from Portugal continues. The Minister of Marine, the dispatch adds, has published an order contemplating the commandant, the officers and sailors who seized the German ships for the manner in which they took their positions and utilized vessels in the Tagus River.

SITUATION CONSIDERED BY SPANISH CABINET

MADRID, March 9.—(via Paris.)—The Cabinet met to-day and considered the situation which might arise in case of a state of war between Portugal and Germany.

PASSENGER TRAIN WRECKED

Every Car of the Manhattan Limited Derailed—None of Passengers Seriously Hurt.

ALTOONA, Pa., March 9.—The Manhattan Limited of the Pennsylvania Railroad, bound from New York to Chicago, crashed into a freight wreck near Port Royal, fifty miles west of Harrisburg, to-night, derailing every car of the passenger train and hurling the locomotive down an embankment.

The engineer and fireman of the limited were buried under their engine, and are believed to have been killed. All the passengers were badly shaken up and several slightly injured, but so far as can be ascertained, no one was seriously hurt.

HOUSE RESTORES MERCHANTS' TAX

Adopts Rate Suggested by Governor and Advisory Board Over Report of Committee.

DEBATE ON MORTGAGE TAX

Segregation of Entire Amount to State Held to Be Unfair to Localities.

By a margin of a single vote, the House of Delegates yesterday rejected the recommendation of the Finance Committee fixing 10 cents as the tax on merchants' purchases in excess of \$100,000, and adopted an amendment making the rate 20 cents—the rate suggested by Governor Stuart and the State Advisory Board on Taxation.

For more than an hour the members fought over the merchants' license-tax section of House bill No. 555, one of the important revenue measures introduced on behalf of the Finance Committee by Delegates White, Moss and Murray. The debate brought frequent charges on the part of members supporting the committee recommendation, that an effort was being made by the advocates of the higher tax to arraign the small merchant against the large one, and to play on the sympathies of the rural members for the country dealers to force an increase in the tax of merchants whose purchases exceed \$100,000.

GORDON OBJECTS TO TAX ON TOBACCO DEALERS

When the House reached the section which imposes a license tax of \$5, on all retail dealers in tobacco, snuff and cigars, Delegate Gordon offered a motion striking the entire section from the bill. This tax was imposed by the special session of 1915, and was merely repeated in the measure under consideration.

Delegate Gordon objected to the tax because, he said, it worked a hardship on small country merchants. These, he said, are already sufficiently taxed under the bill, and should not be forced to pay an additional tax for the privilege of handling a few cigarettes and cigars.

Delegate Bowser implored the House to call a halt to the attempts to destroy the effect of the revenue measures by amendments. In an effort to protect a few small merchants in the country, he pointed out, Delegate Gordon now proposes to relieve all merchants, large and small, from a very necessary tax, which yields the State about \$45,000 a year in revenue.

ONLY FAIR THAT SMALL MERCHANTS BEAR THEIR SHARE

Floor Leader Willis joined in the protest. He had voted, he said, to increase the tax on the large merchants, and was willing to pay fair by insisting that the small merchants, too, bear their proper share of the burden.

In reference to the opposition Delegate Gordon withdrew his original amendment striking out the entire tobacco tax section, and offered as a substitute an amendment relieving from the payment of the \$5 tobacco tax all merchants whose purchases were not in excess of \$10,000 a year. This, he said, would protect only the weak, and would leave the tax as before with respect to the larger merchants, who are able to bear it.

The amendment was accepted by the yeas of 19, and was adopted.

Earlier in the discussion the House had approved an amendment making the annual State franchise tax of water, heat, light and power companies three-fourths of 1 per cent of their gross receipts. The bill as reported fixed the rate at 1 per cent—the amount which has been agreed upon by the Senate Committee on Finance.

With these three amendments incorporated, the bill was placed on its passage and approved by a vote of 66 to 22. It goes now to the Senate for concurrence.

INCREASES MINIMUM OF MERCHANTS' LICENSES

The bill increases the minimum merchants' license tax from \$5 to \$10. To this increase there was little opposition. Under the bill, as amended, the first \$2,000 of purchases will be taxed \$10, and all additional purchases without limit will be taxed at a flat rate of 20 cents on the \$100. As reported from the committee, purchases in excess of \$2,000 and up to \$100,000 were taxed 20 cents, and those in excess of \$100,000, 10 cents on the \$100.

The amendment providing for a uniform rate of 20 cents on all purchases over \$2,000 was offered by Delegate Epes, of Nottoway, who said he saw no reason for giving the large merchant an advantage over the small one. The amendment was strongly supported by Delegate Adams, of Charlotte, and Delegate Gordon.

EPES AMENDMENT IS ADOPTED, 42 TO 41

Delegates Hobson, Myers, Cox and Jordan opposed the amendment, and urged the House to support the committee. Evidence had been introduced at the committee hearings, they said, by the large merchants to show that the increase in the volume of sales above \$100,000 did not bring commensurate returns, and that the larger merchant is confronted with special organization and overhead charges which do not oppress the smaller dealer. The committee was satisfied, they told the House, that a smaller rate for purchases in excess of \$100,000 was amply justified.

The Epes amendment was carried by 42 yeas to 41 nays.

(Continued on Fifth Page.)

CRISIS NEAR AT HAND IN VERDUN BATTLE

French and Germans Now at Grips in Greatest Slaughter of War.

RIVAL CLAIMS OF VICTORY

Berlin's Report That Vaux Is Captured Is Flatly Contradicted by Paris.

(Special Cable to The Times-Dispatch.) LONDON, March 9.—The tide of battle before Verdun has swept back to the eastern bank of the Meuse, where French and German s are at grips in the greatest slaughter of the war.

From this report of death-to-night, rival claims of victory are received. Both French and Germans report fresh glories for their arms.

The Berlin official statement says that in a furious night assault over the shell-swept terrain, the German reserve regiments under General von Guretzky-Cornitz carried the armored fort of Vaux, the village of the same name, and numerous adjoining positions, all of which were strongly fortified.

Two French communiques, representing the same fighting, flatly contradict this German claim.

The afternoon statement, which makes no mention of the battle for Fort Vaux, says that German troops who penetrated the village were driven out immediately at the point of the bayonet.

ATTACKS ARE REPULSED WITH ENORMOUS LOSSES

The midnight statement, issued hours later than the German report, says: "East of the Meuse the Germans made numerous attacks on our front from Douaumont to Vaux. At the exit from the village of Douaumont their attack was broken by our infantry and artillery fire. Furious assaults against the village of Vaux were likewise repulsed, with heavy losses to the enemy."

"Finally, the Germans launched against our trenches along the foot of the ridge, which is surmounted by Fort Vaux, violent attacks in solid formation, which were repulsed with enormous losses to the enemy inflicted by our barrier fire."

It is pointed out that the French statements have been twelve hours behind the Berlin reports in following the developments of the Verdun fighting.

Both French and Germans admit that the crisis is at hand in the great battle of Verdun, the most tremendous of the world war.

The struggle, which is entering its sixteenth day, is still gaining fury, until it is expected to reach its climax, on which the fate of the nations hangs.

MORE THAN 200,000 MEN ALREADY SLAUGHTERED

More than 200,000 men have been slaughtered in the eighteen days of battle. The German losses are estimated at 125,000. Major Morath, the German critic, places the French casualties at 75,000 to 80,000.

The battle is being waged back and forth on a front of about ten miles, intersected by the River Meuse. While the eyes of the world for the moment are turned on the struggle east of the stream, fighting of tremendous violence is progressing on the west side.

Here, during the day, French and German hunters each other down in the shell-swept Corbeaux woods. Here, again, their chains are diametrically opposed.

The French midnight statement says: "West of the Meuse our troops continued to progress during the day in the Corbeaux woods, nearly the whole of which we now hold."

The Berlin War Office reports: "West of the Meuse we were occupied in clearing out the rest of the French troops remaining in the woods of Corbeaux."

The French statement is surprising, in view of the previous night's communique, which said that at that time the Germans occupied only the eastern extremity of the forest. No fresh German attacks had been reported.

HISTORIC PRESERVES REDUCED TO KINDLINGS

On this bank of the river the German shell fire has literally swept the country clear of forests. Historic preserves have been reduced to kindlings. The crest of a hill has been blown away, and the Forges River has disappeared, having been dammed in half a dozen places by fallen timber.

The German advance to Fort Vaux and beyond would have been more than two miles into the French lines, and would put the Kaiser's soldiers within four miles of Verdun itself. It would bring them before the inner ring of French defenses and give their heavy guns command of a wide stretch of territory and the principal defending forts to the south.

The French report the repulse of further German attacks on the village of Bethoumont, west of the Meuse, while Berlin states that during the day three French aeroplanes were shot down by German aircraft reconnoitering over Verdun.

VAUX VILLAGE AND FORT CAPTURED BY GERMANS

BERLIN, March 9.—(via London.)—The village and armored fort of Vaux, northeast of Verdun, has been captured by the Germans, the War Office announced to-day.

The announcement says numerous American casualties were sustained by the American civilians and soldiers:

Killed: A. L. Ritchie, proprietor Central Hotel.

W. R. Walker, United States customs rider.

C. C. Miller, owner of drug store.

Mrs. Milton James.

J. J. Dean.

J. J. Moore, merchant.

Frank Readvale, horseshoer.

Troop K.

Sergeant Marg A. Dobbs, machine-gun troop.

Corporal Paul Simon.

Sergeant John Nievergelt, band.

Corporal Harry Wiswall, Troop G.

Private Fred A. Griffin, Troop K.

Private Thomas Butler, Troop F.

American killed in death in Central Hotel.

Charles DeWitt Miller, Albuquerque, N. M.

H. M. Hart, cattle inspector, El Paso, Tex.

Wounded: Lieutenant C. C. Benson, Troop G, Thirteenth Cavalry, shot in the left arm.

Jesse P. Taylor, Troop F, shot through the head.

Theodore Kinkorke, Troop L, shot through both legs.

Michael Barmazel, machine-gun troop, shot through the neck.

James Veeder, Troop K, shot in the chest.

John Verbrugg, Troop K.

James Vanner, Troop M, shot through the arm.

John Keogh, Troop G.

Milton James, railroad employee.

Villa Leads Bandits in Raid Over Border to Attack Columbus

American Casualties; Civilians and Soldiers

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LOSSES IN EXCESS OF 100 INFLECTED ON MEXICANS

American Pursuit in Mexico Said to Have Accounted for More Than Seventy-Five Bandits.

SEVEN OF U. S. CAVALRY DEAD

Several Other Americans Either Burned to Death or Murdered by Invading Persecutors, Who Pelt Snipers to Pick Off Fleeing People.

COLUMBUS, N. M., March 9.—The casualties of the Thirteenth Cavalry in the fighting at Columbus were seven killed and six wounded.

Villa's total losses in the day's fighting were estimated in excess of 100, and twice that many injured. The American pursuit into Mexico, which ended about 2 o'clock, is reported to have accounted for more than seventy-five Mexicans killed.

The American loss on the Mexican side of the border was one corporal slain when Villa threw out a heavy guard to engage the American pursuers.

Charles DeWitt Miller, of Albuquerque, and Dr. H. J. Hart, of El Paso, were burned to death in the fire that destroyed the Commercial Hotel.

The body of Walton Walker, a Sunday school convention delegate from Plains, N. M., who was shot to death with W. T. Ritchie, proprietor of the hotel, also was incinerated.

The Mexicans set the hotel on fire, together with a number of other buildings, and posted snipers to pick off Americans as they fled.

Mrs. M. James was shot and killed in the doorway of another hotel, from which she was running with her sister, Mrs. James, who had been driven from her drug store across the street. Her sister, a child not yet in her teens, escaped the fusillade without a scratch. Mrs. James' husband was wounded.

THESE HAVE NARROW ESCAPES FROM BANDITS

Mrs. S. T. E. Ryan, wife of the captain of Troop I, and Captain Rudolph Snyder, of Troop H, with Mrs. Snyder and her little children, had narrow escapes from the bandits. The Ryan house fronts regimental quarters and the ditch along which Villa's troops came.

Mrs. Ryan was in bed in line with a front window facing the ditch, in which Villa opened the attack. Bullets shattered the glass and struck through her clothing arranged on a chair near the bed.

Fred Griffin, private of K Troop, was on sentry duty in front of the headquarters of Troop I, and Captain Rudolph Snyder, of Troop H, with Mrs. Snyder and her little children, had narrow escapes from the bandits. The Ryan house fronts regimental quarters and the ditch along which Villa's troops came.

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PURSuing VILLA AND OUTLAWS WHO RAIDED COLUMBUS

American Troopers Reported in Action Against Large Bandit Force.

NO ORDER AT PRESENT FOR RETURN OF SOLDIERS

Administration Will Give Army Free Rein to Catch Murderers if Possible.

CARRANZA FORMALLY NOTIFIED

General Funston, in Full Authority on Border, Makes Necessary Troop Movements.

American Troops Return to Border

SAN ANTONIO, TEX., March 9.—Major Frank Tompkins, commanding the detachment of American troops which pursued General Villa and his bandits into Mexico after the attack early to-day on Columbus, N. M., has returned to the border, after engaging in three running fights with the Mexicans, who finally made a stand, which stopped the advance of the American soldiers. This information was conveyed to-night to Major-General Frederick Funston, commanding the Southern Department, United States Army, in the official report on the situation from Colonel H. J. Stuehm, in command at Columbus.

WASHINGTON, March 9.—Washington stands squarely behind Colonel Stuehm in sending cavalry into Mexico in pursuit of Francisco Villa and his band of outlaws, who raided Columbus, N. M., to-day, murdering American soldiers and citizens and firing the town.

Secretary Lansing to-night informed the de facto government of Mexico, through Eliseo Arrondondo, its ambassador designate here, that he trusted no objection would be made to the action of the American troops, they having followed what is known in military circles as a "hot trail." No orders have been issued for the return of the soldiers, and it is not probable that any will be issued for the present.

Shocked indignation occasioned by news of Villa's outrage was quickly succeeded by undisguised satisfaction in official circles over the knowledge that, after three years of patient forbearance, United States troops actually were on Mexican soil to avenge the death of their comrades and bring to justice the outlaws whose depredations have terrorized Americans on both sides of the international border.

Reports that the American troops were in action to-night against a much larger force of bandits were heard with anxious interest in official circles.

ARMY TO BE GIVEN FREE REIN TO CATCH BANDITS

While no formal word of the policy of the administration was given out, it was reliably stated that the army would be given free rein to catch the bandits if possible. It was not considered in administration circles that Colonel Stuehm's act in any sense constituted an invasion of Mexico, a policy which the administration has opposed in the past, and will continue to oppose. Formally there is no authority for the presence of the American troops in Mexico. In fact, the patrols along the border have been under orders not to cross under any conditions. If the provocation had not been so great, the officers responsible for the action of to-day would face court-martial. Suggestions that Colonel Stuehm, in command at Columbus, might be court-martialed, however, were assented to by some officials, while at the War Department itself the subject was not discussed.

Newton D. Baker, who became Secretary of War to-day, conferred over the situation with President Wilson to-night. Three hours later Mr. Baker said no orders had been sent for the recall of the American soldiers.

Major-General Scott, chief of staff, telegraphed General Funston, at Fort Sam Houston, in command of the border forces, for all details available. He said the policy of the government would not be outlined until General Funston's reply had been received.

What had been done toward strengthening the forces near Columbus or reinforcing the little command that had ridden against the bandits apparently was not known at the War Department to-night.

GENERAL FUNSTON IN FULL AUTHORITY ON BORDER

General Funston has full authority on the border, and is making such troop movements as he thinks necessary. Even he, however, is not fully informed as to what Colonel Stuehm has done, and a brief report reached the department during the day of the raid, but afterward General Funston delayed a dispatch from Brigadier-General Pershing telling of a telephone report from Colonel Stuehm and announcing that five troops had been sent across